How are plants named?

Many people know a ‘gum tree’ and have heard them called Eucalypts. The trees that line the entrance road within Myall Park Botanic Garden have the botanical name *Eucalyptus argophloia*. Why have these plants been given this name?

The Swedish naturalist Linnaeus (I707-1778) methodically classified the living world by establishing the dual (binomial) naming system.
Two names are given to each plant.
The first is the genus or group name and always starts with a capital letter.
The second is the species or specific name and always begins with a small letter.

Most scientific names are derived from Latin, some Greek. They are the same in every language and script – *Eucalyptus argophloia* is written like this even in Japanese text.
The meaning of *Eucalyptus argophloia:*

Eucalyptus is derived from – Greek *eu* – well; Greek *calyptos* – covered, describing the bud of a eucalypt is ‘well covered’ by a cap which falls off when the flower opens.

The species name *argophloia* comes from – Greek *argo* – bright, white; Greek *phloios* – bark. So the common name of *Eucalyptus argophloia* is White gum

Plant names can describe:

* aroma	*odorata* - sweet scented
* flowers	*umbellata* - flowers in umbels, like the ribs of an umbrella
* geography	*australis* – southern
* growth habit	*prostrata* – prostrate, close to the ground
* habitat	*maritima* - by the sea
* leaves	*diversifolius* – different kinds of leaves on the same plant
* people	*Darwinia* - Charles Darwin's grandfather

Look for plant specimens in the Garden with the following species names.

* habitat	*alpina* – Latin *alpinus* - alpine region
* flower	*obliquistigma* – Latin *obliquis* - slanting, oblique; Greek *stigma* – stigma of the flower
* flower	*nudiflora* – Latin *nudus* – naked; Latin *flos* - a flower
* flower	*singuliflora* – Latin *singularis* - singular; Latin *flos* - a flower
* habit	*robusta* – Latin *robustus* - strong, large
* habit	*repens* – Latin *repens* - creeping
* leaves	*parallela* – Greek *parallelos* – alongside one another parallel veins on the leaves
* leaves	*petrophiloides* – Greek *oides* - resembling foliage similar to some of the genus Petrophile,
* leaves	*pteridifolia* – Latin *pteris* - fern; Latin folium - a leaf
* leople	*banksii* – Joseph Banks (1743 - 1820) father of Australian botany
* people	*whiteana* – C.T. White (1890 - 1950) Queensland government botanist

In the space below note species names that attract your interest and research their meanings on the internet or in botanical texts in your local library.